

**Oral History Interview with
Hugh O. La Bounty**

Cal Poly Pomona University Library

Hugh O. La Bounty Summary

Hugh O. La Bounty served as president of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona from 1978 to 1991. He first joined the school in 1953 as an instructor in English and Speech. At that time, the school that would become Cal Poly Pomona operated as a satellite campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo and was located at the Voorhis Campus in San Dimas. In 1949, the state of California had acquired the site of the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Ranch in nearby Pomona, and it was known as the Kellogg Campus. Cal Poly had outgrown the Voorhis Campus and began moving instruction to the Kellogg Campus in the 1950s. La Bounty was appointed the Building Coordinator and Development Officer for the new campus. He discusses the process of establishing the new campus and the various changes that took place at Cal Poly Pomona over the previous 10 years.

Subject Headings

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona—History
Voorhis Campus
Women in Higher Education

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Introductions	1
Educational Background	1
Arrival to Voorhis Campus, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo	1
Educational Program at Voorhis Campus	1-2
Move to Kellogg Campus	2-3
State Building Construction on Kellogg Campus	3-4
Facilities for Women Students on Campus	5
Future Campus Master Plans & Enrollment Growth	5-7
La Bounty's Own Plans for the Near Future	7-8

Hugh O. La Bounty

April 11, 1966

*Interview Conducted by Sharon Sforzini Grant
Transcribed by Kimberley Erickson*

SG: This is one of a series of taped interviews dealing with an oral history of Cal Poly Pomona as seen through the personal experiences and remembrances of those individuals who were present during its early growth and development. Dr. Hugh La Bounty, Executive Dean of Planning and Development is interviewed on this tape.

Dr. La Bounty what were your background and experiences and education before coming to Cal Poly?

HOL: Just before I came to Cal Poly I worked at the Citrus College and Union High School in Azusa/ Glendora. I worked for Citrus from 1950-53 as a teacher in Social Sciences and as an Administer dealing with boy's discipline.

SG: Where did you attend college?

HOL: I spent two years at Humboldt State College when I got out of the Navy. Then I went to the University of Redlands and where I spent three more years getting my degree in History and teaching credential - Masters in History. Upon graduation from Redlands I went to my first job, which was at Citrus College and High School.

SG: When did you first come to Cal Poly?

HOL: I came to Cal Poly in 1953 as an instructor in English and Speech, and spent two years in that particular role when I was asked to help out with the Development Program. I spent the next two years there as the Building Coordinator for the College.

SG: Do you recall your first impressions about the physical environment such as the grounds and the building locations?

HOL: Yes, the Voorhis Campus as I am sure you know is a very, very beautiful facility because of the established grounds. The architecture of the Campus, all of which was due to the good works of the Voorhis family. I was very much impressed with the Campus when I first came there. And still am.

SG: What about the educational standards at this time?

HOL: From my point of view the educational standards relative to the program we had there was quite respectable.

For example, I taught all of my speech classes in the Chapel, constructed on the Voorhis Campus by Mr. [Charles] Voorhis and I don't think you could find a better facility to teach speech than the Chapel.

SG: [unintelligible]

HOL: We had programs leading to a baccalaureate in agricultural fields, but we could not, at that time, award a baccalaureate degree. Students took three years at Voorhis and then took their fourth year in San Luis Obispo. We gave, or offered, to the students all of the general education courses with few exceptions, which were required for a baccalaureate degree. This meant that we had a responsibly full complement of the general education courses, in the Social Sciences, Mathematics, English, and the Sciences.

SG: Do you feel that the move from the Voorhis Campus to the Kellogg site was necessary?

HOL: To the extent that there was a growing demand for Cal Poly's type of program in Southern California, it was necessary. Because the facilities and the land available at the San Dimas location were just not adequate for the number of students at that time. I think the [total] maximum total enrollment of Voorhis was somewhere in the neighborhood of 500 students. At one time during my three years on the campus, we had 285 students as I recall. Therefore, I think that the move had to be made if we were going to accommodate more students.

SG: Do you know how we acquired the land for the Kellogg site?

HOL: The Kellogg property was acquired in much the same way I believe, as the Voorhis property. That is, Mr. Kellogg, and his heirs, had determined that they no longer could or should operate this large piece of property. And as I recall the history of the matter it was first turned over to the University of California as a possible campus location for the University. The period of World War II intervened and during this period it was used by the U.S. Army as a Calvary Remount Station [the Pomona Quartermaster Remount (Depot)] and also as a prisoner of War location for Italian War prisoners. When the War was over, the University assumed control, but the Kellogg Foundation could see that the property wasn't being used - at least the way they thought it should be. They were able through negotiations to have the property returned to them. Subsequently the property became open and available for other uses, at which time Mr. [Julian A.] McPhee heard about the possibility and started negotiations with the Kellogg Foundation for transferring the property to the State of California for use by Cal Poly. As I recall the negotiations with the State of California and Mr. McPhee were concluded on or about 1953.

SG: Do you know if there are any of the stipulations on this deed?

HOL: Yes. There are several stipulations. Of worthy to note, one I think is an obvious one is that by terms of the deed, the College will put on, or have put on, so many horse show a year. I believe the number is 26 or 28, on Sundays. Second, the deed stipulates that the campus will be used for educational program, akin to that which we what we operate at San Luis [Obispo] but in particular emphasis areas, Agriculture, Engineering, and Home Economics.

SG: Since the Kellogg campus has been so developed, have we abandoned the Voorhis area for educational purposes for our students?

HOL: Well, for our students, exclusive of a very small number, I think the answer would have to be yes. We do use the Voorhis campus for students working in the areas of Ornamental Horticulture, Citrus or Fruit Production, and to a lesser extent Landscape Architecture. Other than that, the Kellogg students do not make use of the Voorhis Campus.

SG: Do you recall how all the equipment was transferred from Voorhis over to the Kellogg buildings?

HOL: Yes, I recall this very vividly. One of my assignments as the Building Coordinator and the Development Officer for the campus at that time was to assign responsibility for the move from Voorhis to Kellogg. We were able to hire three or four faculty members overtime for one month in the summer of 1956. Dr. John Lamiman, Mr. Harry Welch, Mr. Edward Appel, Dr. Ronald Rees were the people who were retained to do this. What it meant was some very brutal back-breaking labor, loading equipment, desks, what have you, and getting them on trucks and moving them from Voorhis and over to the Kellogg campus. Unfortunately, the one building that we were to occupy in September in 1956 was to have been completed by August, and it was not completed until the 8th of September. Which meant that the four or five of us, plus some student assistants, had one week to put everything in place to be ready for the opening of the school year.

SG: Was this one building the Science Building?

HOL: This one building was the Science Building.

SG: And did all the administrative facility - educational classrooms – all take place in the one building?

HOL: Everything associated with the classroom function of the buildings, counseling space, admissions, Faculty [offices], library, we even had a very modest feeding service, although the students who were in residence at Voorhis still at that time had their noon lunch down in the horse arena. There was no cafeteria service available per se.

SG: How did the students get from Voorhis over to this campus for their classes?

HOL: We developed a minor and modest bus system that was to cart them back and forth between the two campuses. As it turned out, most of the students had available to them their own transportation. So while we did have the bus service that continued through that year and I think a little bit into the next, it's actual impact on getting students over was rather marginal. Most of the students used their own cars.

SG: When did we finally get more buildings?

HOL: Well, that's a pretty broad question. We have been getting buildings ever since. We had the Science building – the first building which we've already mentioned, was the Science

building which was funded in 1953. We moved into that building in 1956. From 1953 to 1965 the State invested 40 million dollars on the Kellogg Campus and their facilities. After the Science Building was completed, immediate work was started on the library, and on the cafeteria. This was followed in short order by work on the Business Building, the first increment of the Engineering Building, the Administration Building, the Music-Speech-Drama Building - I should have added earlier than the Music-Speech-Drama Building was the existing Gymnasium was under construction.

SG: How did you feel about the move? Were you homesick for Voorhis?

HOL: Not really - to the extent that Voorhis is a very comfortable, beautiful setting. I think one is always homesick for something like that. However, I think the move to the Kellogg Campus, which was equally beautiful in many respects, has been an immense boon to the program of the College. I would not want to return to the Voorhis days.

SG: Do you recall how the students and the teachers adapted to the new surroundings?

HOL: I think they adapted very well with only minor inconveniences.

SG: Was the first year very hectic?

HOL: The first year was very hectic. It made little impact I think because everybody recognized it would be a hectic year and they expected it to be. You have to remember that the faculty at Voorhis probably didn't number too many over 35 or 40. So that we now find ourselves in a situation where we hire each year almost as many faculty as we had at Voorhis. So that the tie to Voorhis, on the part of the faculty and certainly on the part of the students, has lessened each succeeding year as we move away from 1956.

SG: How did you feel about the admittance of women to the Kellogg Campus?

HOL: I was all for it.

SG: All for it. Any problems?

HOL: Not really. I say waggishly that there might have been problems for some faculty people that had developed unique and interesting ways of making points in lectures that no longer were appropriate with girls in classes. I think the only other minor inconvenience was providing certain services for women. I think the net effect of the admission of women to Cal Poly was wholesome and certainly a positive effect. In my own classes I noticed this immediately. In the vernacular, the girls seemed to be "DARs", or "damned average raisers" as the boys were apt to say.

SG: When did the girls finally move into the dorm?

HOL: I can't be too accurate on that. I would guess that somewhere in the period of 1958 to 1960 - no it couldn't have been that - because it wouldn't have been until later. Early 1960's.

SG: Was this a men's dorm converted over for the women?

HOL: No. As I recall and I may be in error on this, I think that originally one or two were designed for women, even though they were used by men. There was nothing inherent in the design of the building to force the allocation to girls or men.

SG: Are there plans for more dormitories?

HOL: Yes.

SG: Are these going to be situated in the same area?

HOL: Yes, the new dorms are to be located due west of the existing dorms. Using the large pond by Kellogg Drive as a mid-point. There will be one dorm on either side of the pond.

SG: Are you aware of any future plans to accommodate the student enrollment growth?

HOL: Yes, let me give you a bit of background on this particular question. First at the direction of the Chancellors' Office, each State college has a consulting architect. In the case of the Kellogg Campus at Cal Poly we have had since 1961 assigned to this campus the architectural firm of Kistner, Wright, and Wright. The principle member of that firm, Henry Wright has been our consulting architect for the last five years. Part of Mr. Wright's responsibility to the College, he prepares in concert with our staff, a master plan for development. We have had approved the master plan for 10,000 FTE and for 20,000 FTE. Both of these plans were approved about a year and half ago by the Board of Trustees. And these actually become our guidelines for campus development.

We currently are looking for 10,000 full-time equivalent students on, or about, 1978-79, and 20,000 students on, or about, the year 2000. In order to develop the facilities to handle students of this number, we had to also develop an Educational Master Plan that really would set the tone for our Physical Master Plan. We have both of these documents approved now by the Chancellor's Office. The Educational Plan takes us for a period of five years into the future. The Physical Master Plan takes us into the future thirty or thirty-five years. Obviously, both of these plans are just that – plans, - and therefore can be modified as the need arises. In order to develop the campus to handle 20,000 FTE we must secure from the State, and parenthetically I might add from the federal government, in the neighborhood of 65 million dollars. Conceivably it might be more than that as prices go up.

This in the immediate future would involve the construction of the new library, which will be located in the existing Engineering parking lot. A new gymnasium which is now under construction, a physical education area, two new dormitories as I already mentioned, and a residence dining hall, in addition to our Landscape Architecture facilities, an addition to the Science Building, and an addition to the Business Building. All of these facilities I just mentioned should be constructed and available for student use on or about 1971-72. Also involved in this are what we call our site-help projects, which take into account our need for

improved roadways, water systems, sewer systems, what have you. My answer to your question is yes, we do have a plan. It's a forward-looking plan. It's a plan in terms of the Physical Master Plan that we review very seriously every three or four years. We are just contemplating now our next major review of that plan to see if it has to be altered due to changing conditions.

SG: You spoke of a new library. What is this present library going to be used for?

HOL: The present library will be converted into what we are now calling our Educational Services building. Simply this means that we will have a rather large lecture capacity for students in the building, plus a curriculum library, and curriculum laboratories for teacher education students, as well as the continuation of the expansion of the existing audio-visual facilities.

SG: Will the Social Sciences ever have a building of their own?

HOL: We have not designated any building for the Social Sciences, for English, or for Mathematics, simply because these three areas can be fitted into a classroom building. I think it's more probable that we will develop a Faculty Office building in which these departments will be housed. The faculty in these departments will use lecture rooms as they are available throughout campus. When the existing library building is converted to an Educational Services building the present plan calls for most of the Social Sciences faculty to be housed in that building.

SG: With the great influx of students to this campus, don't you think that the close student-teacher relationship be completely disrupted?

HOL: I don't think it follows that increasing student numbers necessarily loose close student teacher contact. The reason for this is that feeling on the matter is that we are able to get faculty based on a student-teacher ratio. The more students you have, the more faculty you have. It does follow if you get into the graduate program that grows rapidly that there is a chance that the relationship the between undergraduates and faculty may not be quite as close because graduate classes tend to be smaller and more demanding of faculty time. But I do not accept the premise that with large student numbers you necessarily have to diminish the student, teacher relationship.

SG: Well as our enrollment reaches the 20,000 mark, do you think that we will find it necessary to use big lecture halls for the freshman and sophomore courses rather than the closely-knit small classroom of maybe 20 or 30 students?

HOL: Again, I don't think that it follows that you have to use the large lecture concept to get closer to 20,000. Your question suggests perhaps that there is something inherently wrong with the large lecture concept. I think that it is probably advantageous relative to the course you are talking about, the level at which you are teaching the course, and the instructor involved, that maybe large classes are in order and you can have Arnold Toynbee come lecture on history, assuming that the State is meeting its obligations by having small discussion sections with graduate or senior students to follow it up. I look for that in the next decades of higher education, a good possibility that educational TV may play a key role in higher education. I think that there

are probably many ways to handle large numbers of students while keeping the close student-teacher relationship that we probably haven't even envisioned as yet.

But again, I don't think that in the first place it is necessarily bad to have large classes if you have small discussion sections following the large lectures. And number two; I don't think that large classes necessarily follow with large numbers. As I said before, what does come into the picture—and I think it does in a way, jeopardize in some way to teacher-student relationships—graduate programs because there is a natural tendency on the part of your faculty to want to gravitate to those students who are most interested in your field or discipline and shy away from the youngsters who are just starting out on the road. I submit that this is part of the problem that has been created at the Berkeley Campus at the University of California. We should learn from the experience of others.

SG: Well know that we've talked about the future of Cal Poly, do you have future plans for yourself?

HOL: My only plan at the moment I guess is a negative plan; I have no plan of leaving Cal Poly. Whether or not I would be in this particular assignment I am in now, in the foreseeable future I cannot comment on. But I think that Cal Poly in the long haul, and even in the immediate future, has a magnificent opportunity to develop a reputation in the sense of service to students in the area second to none in Southern California. I think that the faculty members, staff members, administrators, and students are going to see a prestige built up around this school in the next decades in terms of a State college probably second to none. So, I am intent on sticking with it awhile longer.

SG: In conclusion, Dr. La Bounty, can you tell me what your most rewarding experience has been with Cal Poly?

HOL: I would mention several experiences that I look upon with real warmth in the thirteen years that I've been at Cal Poly. I think first and foremost have been my relationships with the students that have impacted Cal Poly. I found our students over the years to be very eager to acquire knowledge and very reasonable in their demands on the college in terms of all sorts of things, co-curricular activities, and what-have you.

Second, I would count my relationships with my faculty colleagues as being most rewarding in the years that I have been here. To that end then, that along with my faculty colleagues that I have been involved in the development of the Social Sciences major, I've been involved with faculty across the campus community, the development of the Teacher Education program. These experiences of building the academic environment for students I would rate very high amongst those items that I feel have given me some modest success at the College.

Third, I think that my involvement in the planning and development area of the College has been most rewarding. This particular area has involved relationships not only with the College community, but with agencies outside of the college. The Department of Finance, the Office of Legislative Analyst, the Chancellor's Office, the Division of Architecture, the Division of Highways, the several cities we count as neighbors to Kellogg.

I should add here that one of my responsibilities for the last four years has been the planning and development of the San Luis Obispo campus and I count very high on the chart of rewarding experiences my association with our colleagues in San Luis Obispo. I would say that these three areas, relationships with students, number two, cooperation with faculty colloques developing curricular programs, and number three having some reasonable responsibility for the planning for both campuses with particular emphasis with Kellogg, was the most rewarding experience I've had in thirteen years.

SG: Well thank you Dr. La Bounty for your contribution to this oral history of Cal Poly. This interview was taped on April 11th, 1966. This is Sharon Sforzini Grant speaking.

INDEX

	Page
Appel, Edward	3
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo	2, 8
Chancellor's Office (California State University)	5, 7
Dormitories	4-5
English and Speech Program	1
Kellogg Campus, Pomona	2-5
Kistner, Wright & Wright Architectural Firm	5
Lamiman, John Dr.	3
Library Building	5-6
Master Plan, Educational	5
Master Plan, Physical	5-6
McPhee, Julian A.	2-3
Pomona Quartermaster Depot (Remount)	2
Rees, Ronald Dr.	3
Science Building	3-5
Social Sciences Department	6-7
Voorhis Campus, San Dimas	1-3
Voorhis, Charles	2
Welch, Harry	3
W. K. Kellogg Foundation	3
Women Students	4-5